A Higher Duty: Vindicating Ryan McCarty's Whistleblowing at the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD)

Introduction: A Crisis of Conscience for the Public Servant

The case of Ryan Christopher McCarty presents a profound and unsettling conflict at the intersection of legal ethics, public accountability, and constitutional duty. It is the story of a decorated public servant who, upon witnessing systemic malfeasance within the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD), was forced into a crisis of conscience. Faced with a choice between the narrow confines of his duty of confidentiality to a corrupt administration and a higher, more fundamental duty to the public and the rule of law, he chose the latter. The subsequent campaign of professional and personal destruction waged against him—culminating in a formal disciplinary proceeding—was not a legitimate exercise in upholding ethical standards but a calculated act of retaliation designed to punish a whistleblower and silence dissent. A thorough examination of the evidence reveals that Mr. McCarty's actions were not only justified, but were a necessary and courageous act of public service, consistent with the highest ideals of his profession and the foundational principles of a transparent, accountable government.

To understand the gravity of Mr. McCarty's decision, one must first understand the character of the man who made it. His professional life is a testament to a consistent, deeply held commitment to public service, marked by a preference for mission over monetary gain. This is not the profile of a disgruntled employee acting out of spite, but of a principled individual whose career has been defined by positions of immense trust and responsibility. Prior to his brief and tumultuous tenure at the KCPD, Mr. McCarty served with distinction as a Captain in the United States Air Force. In this capacity, he was a Missile Combat Crew Commander for the Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) system, a role that entrusted him with the literal keys to the nation's nuclear arsenal.

This position required not only technical expertise, but an unimpeachable level of integrity, stability, and adherence to protocol under the most extreme pressure imaginable. It conferred upon him a Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmentalized Information (TS/SCI) security clearance (one of the highest level granted by the United States government), signifying that he was trusted with the country's most vital secrets. The irony at the heart of his subsequent disciplinary case is staggering: a man deemed trustworthy enough to hold the nation's nuclear launch codes was professionally sanctioned for exposing public misconduct he believed was illegal and harmful to the citizens of Kansas City.

Following his honorable discharge, Mr. McCarty's commitment to public service continued unabated. He served as both a state and federal prosecutor, holding positions in the Greene County and St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney's Offices, the Missouri Attorney General's Office, and as a Special Assistant and later Assistant United States Attorney. In these roles, he was again entrusted with sensitive information and the profound responsibility of administering justice. His career choices consistently reflect what he described as "being motivated more by mission than money," a search for roles with "gravitas" that served a purpose beyond personal enrichment. His wife, Karolyn McCarty, testified to this core aspect of his character, noting that when her husband "perceives an injustice for corruption he will fight against it, he will call it out".

It is this established history of integrity, discipline, and mission-driven service that provides the essential context for his actions at the KCPD. The Department's attempt to frame him as a rogue employee who recklessly disseminated information is fundamentally incredible when weighed against a lifetime of evidence to the contrary. The more logical and evidence-based conclusion is that the malfeasance Mr. McCarty witnessed was so severe, so systemic, and so resistant to internal correction that it compelled a man of his character to take the extraordinary step of blowing the whistle, fully cognizant of the immense personal and professional risks involved. His ordeal was not the result of a personal failing, but of an institutional one—a failure so profound that it forced a dedicated public servant into an impossible choice.

Table 1: Chronology of Key Events in the Ryan McCarty Case

Date	Event
2021.07.23	Kansas City community leaders send a joint letter to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland requesting a pattern-and-practice investigation into corruption and constitutional violations at the KCPD.
2022.06.13	Ryan McCarty begins his employment as Associate General Counsel at the KCPD.
2022.09.16	McCarty begins documenting a hostile work environment and other malfeasance by emailing himself contemporaneous notes of incidents.
2022.09.19	The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) officially notifies the KCPD that it has opened an investigation into employment discrimination practices.

2022.09.26	McCarty meets with KCPD Deputy Chief Michael Hicks to report the hostile work environment and other misconduct within the Office of General Counsel (OGC).
Early Oct. 2022	McCarty files a formal complaint with KCPD's Human Resources department regarding General Counsel Holly Dodge's misconduct. His complaint is one of five formal complaints filed by OGC employees.
2022.11.17	McCarty receives notice that his HR complaint, along with those of his colleagues, has been summarily dismissed without an investigation.
Late Nov. 2022	McCarty raises his concerns directly with Interim Chief Joseph Mabin, who reportedly instructs him not to take the issues to the Board of Police Commissioners (BoPC).
2022.12.07	McCarty is terminated from the KCPD. The stated reason is "unsatisfactory performance during your probationary period." He is escorted from the building in what he described as a "walk of shame."
2022.12.07	On the night of his termination, McCarty emails two DOJ attorneys investigating the KCPD, informing them of his retaliatory firing and identifying other employees with knowledge of discriminatory practices.
2022.12.10	McCarty sends his "Request for Community Intervention," an eight-page letter with a 300+ page omnibus exhibit, to 143 public officials, media members, and community stakeholders.
2022.12.16	David Kenner, attorney for the BoPC, responds to a litigation hold letter from McCarty's counsel with a "veiled threat" to instigate an ethics complaint against McCarty.
2023.01.09	McCarty receives a letter from the Office of Chief Disciplinary Counsel (OCDC) informing him that an investigation has been opened into his conduct.
2023.04.23	McCarty files a formal Charge of Discrimination with the EEOC and Missouri Commission on Human Rights, a precursor to his civil lawsuit against the BoPC.

2023.05.01	The BoPC issues a press release attacking an unnamed "former KCPD employee," claiming his allegations are "not accurate" and were written on "falsified letterhead."
2023.06.26	Nikki Hutson of the Dentons law firm, outside counsel for the KCPD in McCarty's employment matter, files a formal ethics complaint against McCarty with the OCDC on behalf of the KCPD.
2023.12.05	The OCDC files a formal Information against McCarty, charging him with violating attorney ethics rules for revealing confidential client information.
2024.07.25	A formal disciplinary hearing is held before a panel appointed by the Missouri Supreme Court.
2025.07.22	The Missouri Supreme Court issues its opinion, finding McCarty guilty of professional misconduct and ordering his law license suspended.

The Cauldron of Malfeasance: Systemic Failures within the KCPD

Ryan McCarty's whistleblowing was not a reaction to isolated incidents or minor administrative errors. It was a direct response to a deeply entrenched and multifaceted pattern of misconduct within the Kansas City Police Department that he reasonably believed violated constitutional law, state statutes, and the fundamental tenets of public trust. The evidence demonstrates that his concerns were factually grounded, severe in nature, and corroborated by other employees and external events. The malfeasance he uncovered can be categorized into three interconnected areas: (1) the subversion of criminal justice through the mishandling of constitutionally required disclosures, (2) the deliberate cultivation of secrecy through the violation of open records laws, and (3) the maintenance of a toxic and retaliatory internal culture designed to suppress dissent. These were not separate issues but symptoms of a single institutional pathology—a pervasive culture of unaccountability and a determination to operate beyond the reach of public scrutiny.

Subverting Justice: The Willful Mishandling of *Brady/Giglio* Obligations

At the heart of Mr. McCarty's most serious allegations was the KCPD's systemic failure to comply with its constitutional obligations under *Brady v. Maryland* and *Giglio v. United States*. These landmark Supreme Court decisions form the bedrock of a criminal defendant's due process rights, requiring the prosecution team—which includes law enforcement—to disclose all

potentially exculpatory evidence (*Brady*) and any information that could be used to impeach the credibility of government witnesses, including police officers (*Giglio*). Mr. McCarty, with his extensive background as a federal and state prosecutor, was intimately familiar with these obligations, having been trained to err on the side of over-disclosure to ensure fairness and avoid wrongful convictions.

Upon his arrival at the KCPD, he was alarmed to discover what he termed a "reckless or purposeful disregard for the law" pertaining to these materials. He testified that General Counsel Holly Dodge held a "radically different view" on what *Giglio* required and had implemented a process whereby she—rather than the prosecutor—served as the final arbiter of what information would be turned over. This created a profound and untenable conflict of interest: the police department's own lawyer was making unilateral decisions about whether to disclose information that could be damaging to the department's own officers, effectively usurping the prosecutor's constitutional and ethical duty. Mr. McCarty stated he "truly shudder[ed] to think how many criminal cases might have to be retried owing to this wrongheaded approach".

His concerns were not theoretical. They were rooted in a documented history of KCPD misconduct in this exact area. Shortly before McCarty joined the Department, the Missouri Supreme Court had vacated the conviction of Keith Carnes, who had been imprisoned for over 18 years, due to *Brady* violations by the KCPD. Furthermore, in July 2021, a coalition of Kansas City community leaders had sent a letter to the U.S. Attorney General specifically complaining about the KCPD "interfering with *Brady* and *Giglio* requests/materials" and "improperly deciding on its own what evidence is relevant to such requests". This context demonstrates that Mr. McCarty had walked into an organization with a pre-existing and notorious record of subverting defendants' constitutional rights. His attempts to correct this were met with resistance; after he voiced his concerns, Ms. Dodge effectively excluded him from the *Brady/Giglio* process entirely.

A Veil of Secrecy: Violations of the Missouri Sunshine Law and Record Retention Policies

The KCPD's disregard for constitutional disclosure in criminal cases was mirrored by a systemic effort to evade transparency with the public at large. Mr. McCarty's concerns about this began on his very first day of employment, when he learned of a proposed policy to purge all KCPD emails from its systems after a mere six months. As an experienced government attorney, he immediately recognized that such a policy would not only violate Missouri's record retention laws, but would also result in the routine destruction of public records and potentially exculpatory evidence, further compounding the department's *Brady* problems.

His observations confirmed that the Department, under Ms. Dodge's leadership, was actively working to circumvent the Missouri Sunshine Law, which mandates public access to government records. This was corroborated by Sgt. (Ret.) Timothy McClure, who served as the Department's Sunshine Law coordinator and testified that Ms. Dodge was significantly "more willing to withhold information" than her predecessors.

To confirm his suspicions, Mr. McCarty conducted a personal test. Acting as a private citizen, he filed a Sunshine request for a simple list of KCPD's highest-paid employees—information he knew could be generated almost instantly. The KCPD responded by demanding a payment for 2.5 hours of research at an inflated rate, a practice Mr. McCarty identified as a violation of state statute. His assessment was later vindicated. In June 2024, the Jackson County Circuit Court ruled in the case of *Morales v. Board of Police Commissioners of Kansas City* that the KCPD had, in fact, been improperly charging fees for Sunshine requests. This external validation proves that Mr. McCarty's concerns were not the misinterpretations of a disgruntled employee, but accurate legal assessments of unlawful institutional practices.

A Culture of Toxicity: The Hostile Work Environment in the Office of General Counsel

The institutional culture of secrecy and unaccountability was enforced internally through a hostile and retaliatory work environment, particularly within the Office of General Counsel (OGC) under Holly Dodge. This was not a matter of simple personality clashes, but a pattern of demeaning and intimidating behavior that chilled dissent and punished those who questioned the status quo. Mr. McCarty testified that he was treated like a "glorified legal secretary" and that Ms. Dodge would physically "snatch" individuals out of his office to prevent them from seeking his legal advice, an act of professional humiliation and obstruction.

His experience was far from unique. The environment was so toxic that it prompted an unprecedented number of employees to come forward. Mr. McCarty's formal HR complaint was one of five filed by OGC employees, with at least eleven individuals in total either filing complaints or formally corroborating the claims of a hostile work environment fostered by Ms. Dodge.

This widespread discontent was powerfully confirmed during the disciplinary hearing by the testimony of two veteran KCPD officers. Officer Kevin Eifert, a 27-year veteran, testified that he filed his own complaint against Ms. Dodge after being approached by other employees and that Mr. McCarty's willingness to come forward helped him feel it was the "right thing to do". Even more compelling was the testimony of Sgt. (Ret.) Timothy McClure, a 28-year veteran with a law degree who worked in the OGC. McClure voluntarily drove 12 hours to testify on McCarty's behalf, describing the work environment under Ms. Dodge as "absolutely hostile" and the treatment of Mr. McCarty as "absolutely reprehensible". He testified to the veracity of each and

every allegation made by Mr. McCarty. He stated that what was done to Mr. McCarty was a "wrong" that he felt compelled to help "right". This testimony from respected, long-serving officers dismantles any suggestion that Mr. McCarty's complaints were isolated or exaggerated. Instead, it paints a vivid picture of a dysfunctional and abusive workplace where ethical concerns were met with hostility and retaliation.

The Exhaustion of Internal Remedies: A System Unwilling to Police Itself

A central pillar of the argument against Ryan McCarty is the implicit suggestion that he acted rashly, circumventing proper channels to air his grievances publicly. The evidence, however, demonstrates the precise opposite. Mr. McCarty engaged in a methodical, good-faith effort to address the malfeasance he witnessed by following the KCPD's own chain of command. His ultimate decision to blow the whistle was not a first resort, but a last resort, undertaken only after every internal avenue for redress had been systematically blocked, ignored, or proven to be a facade. The KCPD's internal mechanisms were not merely ineffective; they were designed to protect the institution's leadership from accountability, creating a closed loop of impunity that made external disclosure the only viable option for a conscientious employee.

Mr. McCarty's ascent up the chain of command was textbook. He first raised his concerns about the unconstitutional handling of *Brady/Giglio* materials and other misconduct directly with his supervisor, General Counsel Holly Dodge. Rather than engaging in a substantive discussion or correcting the practices, Ms. Dodge's response was to sideline him, effectively excluding him from the very processes he was attempting to reform. When this direct approach failed, he escalated his concerns to the next level: Deputy Chief Michael Hicks. During a meeting on September 26, 2022, Deputy Chief Hicks acknowledged that Ms. Dodge had been reprimanded in the past for similar misconduct, confirming that the command staff was already aware of her problematic behavior. Yet, his only proposed solution was for Mr. McCarty to file a formal Human Resources complaint—a process that would ultimately prove futile.

Following this guidance, Mr. McCarty and several of his colleagues took the prescribed step of filing formal complaints. This action, which should have triggered a rigorous and impartial investigation, instead revealed the true nature of the KCPD's internal review process. On November 17, 2022, Mr. McCarty received notice that his complaint—along with those of his colleagues—had been summarily dismissed without any investigation whatsoever. This was not an administrative oversight; it was a deliberate institutional decision to quash dissent. By dismissing the corroborated complaints of at least eleven employees against a single, high-ranking supervisor, the KCPD command staff sent an unequivocal message: the institution would protect its own, and any employee who challenged its leadership would be ignored.

The futility of this process was so well understood internally that some employees were too intimidated to even participate. Sgt. McClure testified that he did not file his own formal complaint because he knew from experience that it would be a "sham" and that his primary concern had to be "protecting my spot" to earn his pension and avoid retaliation. This testimony is a damning indictment of the KCPD's internal culture, revealing an environment where employees believed that speaking out was not only pointless but professionally perilous.

Having exhausted these channels, Mr. McCarty made one final attempt to resolve the matter internally by bringing his concerns directly to the top of the organization, Interim Chief Joseph Mabin. This final appeal was met with a direct order to stand down. Interim Chief Mabin allegedly instructed Mr. McCarty not to take his concerns to the Board of Police Commissioners, the civilian oversight body. This alleged directive effectively severed the last remaining internal avenue for recourse, leaving Mr. McCarty with a stark choice: either become complicit through silence in the ongoing misconduct or seek intervention from an authority outside the compromised KCPD structure. The systematic failure of the KCPD to police itself, from the immediate supervisor to the head of the department, made his subsequent public disclosure not only a justified action but an unavoidable one.

The Whistleblower's Gambit: The Public Disclosure and Its Justification

After being systematically stonewalled, formally silenced, and ultimately terminated in a retaliatory fashion, Ryan McCarty executed his final option. His disclosure of KCPD malfeasance was not a reckless leak of confidential information, but rather a principled, calculated appeal to the only authority left that could effect change: the public. His actions, while technically running afoul of an absurdly narrow interpretation of his duty of confidentiality, were ethically and legally justified by a higher duty to the public interest, the U.S. Constitution, and the Missouri Constitution. He was navigating an ethical tightrope, and his decision to prioritize the public good over institutional secrecy was a courageous act that should be vindicated, not punished.

The Retaliatory Termination and the "Letter to the World"

The KCPD's final act of internal suppression was Mr. McCarty's termination on December 7, 2022. The manner of his dismissal was designed for maximum intimidation. It was a "showy firing," a "walk of shame" where he was escorted out by two majors as a clear warning to other potential dissenters. The official reason provided—"unsatisfactory performance" during a non-existent probationary period—was a transparent pretext, a "sham" reason to punish him for his internal complaints. Major Daniel Gates even attempted to dissuade him from exercising his right to appeal by threatening that the hearing would be a "very public" humiliation, a tactic

apparently common among KCPD command staff to intimidate employees into silence.

Faced with this final, unequivocal act of retaliation, Mr. McCarty concluded that the system was irredeemable from within. That same night, he emailed the Department of Justice attorneys who were already investigating the KCPD, informing them of his retaliatory firing. Three days later, on December 10, 2022, he sent his comprehensive "Request for Community Intervention" to 143 stakeholders, including elected officials, prosecutors, community leaders, and the media. He attached a 300+ page "Omnibus Exhibit" of internal emails not out of malice, but because he knew from observing the BoPC's past behavior of "bury, deflect, spin" that his claims would be dismissed without corroborating evidence.

The Ethical Tightrope: Reconciling Confidentiality with a Higher Duty

The disciplinary charges against Mr. McCarty centered on his violation of Missouri Rule 4-1.9(c), which governs a lawyer's duty of confidentiality to a former client. However, this rule cannot be interpreted in a vacuum, especially in the context of a government attorney. The Rules of Professional Conduct themselves acknowledge this complexity. Comment to Rule 4-1.13, "Organization as Client," explicitly states that for a government lawyer, defining the client and the corresponding obligations "may be more difficult" and that "a different balance between maintaining confidentiality and assuring that the wrongful act is prevented or rectified" may be necessary because "public business is involved".

Mr. McCarty's testimony reveals a man grappling with this very balance. He did not act lightly. He described a three-day "crisis of conscious" where he felt helpless to protect the public and his former colleagues who remained in a toxic environment. He sought moral counsel from two Catholic priests. His ultimate decision was grounded in the profound belief that a government entity does not have a right to confidentiality in its own malfeasance, especially when that malfeasance involves violating citizens' constitutional rights and is funded by taxpayer dollars. He testified that he could not conceive how an act that seemed so "morally right" could be deemed ethically wrong. His actions were not a rejection of his ethical duties but an attempt to fulfill what he reasonably perceived as his highest ethical duty.

The Citizenry as the Highest Authority

The most sophisticated justification for Mr. McCarty's actions lies in a careful reading of Rule 4-1.13(b). The rule instructs a lawyer who knows of organizational misconduct that is likely to result in substantial injury to the organization to "refer the matter to higher authority in the organization." Mr. McCarty did this repeatedly, ascending the chain of command to the level of the Interim Chief, who then blocked his final internal path to the Board of Police

Commissioners. At this point, the question becomes: for a state-controlled police department, who is the ultimate "higher authority"?

The answer is found not in the KCPD's internal hierarchy, but in the foundational principles of democratic governance. The City of Kansas City's own organizational chart provides a stunning piece of evidence: it places the "Citizens of Kansas City" at the very top, above the Mayor and the Board of Police Commissioners. This is not mere symbolism; it is an admission of the department's ultimate source of authority and accountability. Furthermore, the Missouri Constitution, in its very first article, declares, "[t]hat all political power is vested in and derived from the people".

Viewed through this lens, Mr. McCarty's "Request for Community Intervention" was not an unauthorized leak; it was a procedurally correct escalation. Having been rebuffed by every subordinate authority within the organization—his supervisor, a deputy chief, and the interim chief—he referred the matter to the highest authority of all: the people. His public disclosure was a direct, logical, and constitutionally grounded appeal to the organization's true principals after its designated agents had failed and refused to act.

The Price of Integrity: Retaliation and the Weaponization of the Disciplinary Process

The aftermath of Ryan McCarty's disclosure was not a sober institutional self-reflection or a good-faith investigation into his serious allegations. Instead, the KCPD and its agents launched a swift, multi-pronged campaign of retaliation designed to destroy his professional credibility, undermine his ability to earn a living, and punish him for his act of public service. This retaliatory campaign reveals a profound institutional panic, the desperate measures of an organization whose corrupt practices were suddenly exposed to the light. The ferocity of the response serves as indirect but powerful corroboration of the very malfeasance Mr. McCarty sought to expose. Crucially, the evidence shows that the attorney disciplinary process itself was co-opted and used as a primary weapon in this campaign.

The retaliation began almost immediately. In response to a standard litigation hold letter from Mr. McCarty's employment attorneys, David Kenner, the attorney and secretary for the Board of Police Commissioners, sent a letter on December 16, 2022, containing what McCarty's counsel accurately described as a "veiled threat". Mr. Kenner's letter invoked the Rules of Professional Conduct and suggested Mr. McCarty had violated his ethical duties, a clear signal that the Board intended to use the disciplinary system against him. This threat was quickly realized; less than a month later, Mr. McCarty received a letter from the Office of Chief Disciplinary Counsel (OCDC) opening an investigation.

The most public act of retaliation came on May 1, 2023, when the BoPC issued an extraordinary press release attacking an unnamed "former KCPD employee". The release falsely accused him of writing on "falsified letterhead" and claimed his allegations were "not accurate," based on an internal review by outside counsel. The timing of this release was highly suspect. It came nearly five months after McCarty's disclosure, but only days after he had filed his formal Charge of Discrimination with the EEOC and the Missouri Commission on Human Rights. This timing strongly suggests the press release was not a good-faith effort to inform the public, but a calculated, defamatory strike intended to discredit him in advance of his civil lawsuit and to influence the ongoing OCDC investigation.

The consequences of this campaign were devastating. As Mr. McCarty and his wife testified, his professional life was systematically dismantled. Job opportunities that had been promising suddenly vanished after the press release was published; potential employers began "ghosting" him. He was forced off the federal Criminal Justice Act (CJA) panel, a key source of work for criminal defense attorneys, after the panel became aware of the situation. The financial and emotional toll on his family, which included seven young children and a wife who was pregnant at the time of his firing, was immense.

The culmination of this retaliatory strategy was the formal OCDC complaint filed on June 26, 2023. Critically, this complaint was not filed by a disinterested party or a member of the public. It was filed by Nikki Hutson of the Dentons law firm—the very firm hired by the KCPD to conduct the internal investigation and to defend the department against Mr. McCarty's forthcoming employment lawsuit. This act represents a clear and disturbing weaponization of the attorney disciplinary system. The Preamble to the Missouri Rules of Professional Conduct explicitly warns that the "purpose of the Rules... can be subverted when they are invoked by an opposing party as a procedural weapon". This is precisely what occurred. The KCPD, facing a credible whistleblower lawsuit, used its own legal counsel to trigger a disciplinary proceeding against its accuser, a tactic designed to drain his resources, damage his reputation, and gain leverage in the civil litigation. This abuse of the disciplinary process is perhaps the most compelling evidence that the actions taken against Mr. McCarty were not about ethics, but about power, intimidation, and silencing a voice that dared to speak truth to power.

Conclusion: Vindicating the Whistleblower in the Public Interest

The case of Ryan McCarty is a stark illustration of the immense pressures faced by government attorneys who discover and seek to rectify official misconduct. The evidence overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that he acted not only correctly, but honorably. He is a credible and decorated public servant who encountered severe, systemic, and corroborated malfeasance within the Kansas City Police Department—misconduct that threatened the constitutional rights of citizens and eroded public trust. He diligently exhausted all viable internal channels for redress,

only to be met with indifference, stonewalling, and ultimately, a direct order to remain silent before being terminated in a retaliatory and humiliating fashion.

Left with no other recourse, Mr. McCarty made the difficult but necessary decision to appeal to the highest authority in a democratic society: the people. His "Request for Community Intervention" was a principled act of whistleblowing, grounded in the belief that a government entity, funded by and created to serve the people, cannot claim a right to secrecy in its own wrongdoing. His actions were a profound act of public service, consistent with the highest ideals of the legal profession, which call upon lawyers to serve as guardians of the law.

To punish Mr. McCarty for this disclosure sets a dangerous and chilling precedent. It effectively grants government agencies a shield of immunity, silencing the very attorneys who are best positioned to identify and prevent misconduct. It creates an irreconcilable conflict, where Missouri law statutorily protects public employee whistleblowers while its attorney disciplinary system is used to punish them, a contradiction that undermines the clear legislative intent to foster transparency and accountability. If the Missouri Supreme Court's decision is left to stand, it will send a clear message to every government attorney in the state: choose between complicity in corruption or the ruin of your career.

Vindicating Ryan McCarty is therefore about more than one man's law license. It is about affirming the essential and protected role of the whistleblower as a check on governmental power. It is about ensuring that the duty of confidentiality is not twisted into a gag order that protects institutional corruption. Ryan McCarty upheld his highest duty—not to the flawed leadership of the KCPD, but to the citizens of Kansas City and to the rule of law. He did the right thing.